

Creating Documentary Entries

Constantly changing technology offers students limitless possibilities in developing media-based presentations for the documentary category. Students may create documentaries using [slides](#), [film](#), [videos](#), and/or [computers](#). Whatever presentation format is chosen, students must be able to operate all equipment, both during production and at each level of competition.

Important. The most important aspect of any entry is its historical quality. Students should not get so caught up in the production of a documentary that they lose sight of the importance of the historical quality. Judges are not looking for glitzy productions; rather, they are looking for solid research and a thorough analysis of the chosen topic.

Slide Presentations

Although the use of video and computer-based presentations in the documentary category is growing, slide presentations are still popular and effective. Slides can be either purchased or produced by students. The key to an effective entry is a good combination of visual images and recorded narrative. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Make a [storyboard](#) of the types of images that explain the theme.
- Photograph pictures from books to build a slide collection and avoid too much repetition.
- Music is an important addition to the recorded narrative.
- Make sure the narrative fits with the image on the screen.

Film and Video Presentations

The availability of home video cameras has increased the popularity of this entry category, although movie cameras are still used by some students. If students are able to use editing equipment in their school or elsewhere, this can be an exciting and educational project. Many communities have cable access stations that have video equipment available for public use. Following are some suggestions for film and video entries.

Students should:

- Operate all camera and editing equipment.
- Draw up a [storyboard](#) of the scenes they will be shooting.
- Present a variety of panning shots, interviews, live action, and still subjects.
- Keep track of the scenes in a notebook or on index cards to make editing easier.
- Include music as an effective addition to the sound track.

Computer-Based Presentations

The computer has become a very important tool for creating documentaries. Students are using computer technology to create special effects, animation, graphics, and other visuals for use in slide or videotape presentations. Students who choose to use the computer to create their entries should have access to computers with multimedia capabilities and should be familiar with at least one type of presentation software. QuickTime and Adobe Premiere are two examples of software packages that are used to create projects. Students should also have access to editing equipment that they can operate themselves.

While most students are using computers as tools to help them to create various aspects of their presentations, some students are using computers as their vehicle for presentation. Although doing so is acceptable, there are a number of limitations to using the computer as the presentation device: Computer equipment is not supplied at the various levels of competition—students will have to provide their own equipment; computer presentations cannot be interactive (judges cannot push buttons, etc.); computer monitors are often too small for the judges and the audience to see; and computer presentations often inadvertently focus on the technology behind the presentation rather than providing an in-depth analysis of a historical topic.